



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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Egypt: The founding date of the al-Ghad party; the date of and the reason for the arrest of its leader, Ayman Nour; demonstrations that occurred following his arrest; the treatment by the state of al-Ghad members (2005 - February 2010)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Human Rights Watch indicates that the Political Parties Affairs Committee in Egypt approved a new political party, the al-Ghad (Tomorrow) party headed by an independent member of Parliament, Ayman Nour, on 27 October 2004 (2005). However, the founding date of the party before it obtained official approval is uncertain as a 2 November 2005 *Al-Ahram Weekly* article states that although the Political Parties Committee had given the party an official licence in October 2004, the Committee had rejected, beginning in 2003, three prior attempts by the party to obtain a licence. Another *Al-Ahram Weekly* article states that three previous applications by the al-Ghad party to obtain approval were rejected because the party platform was deemed not to be substantially different from that of any existing party (4-10 Nov. 2004).

Ayman Nour was arrested on 29 January 2005 (AI 4 Feb. 2005; Inter Press Service 9 Feb. 2005). Amnesty International reports that he was accused of having falsified over a thousand signatures in the application to legally register his party. (AI 23 May 2006). He was released on bail on 12 March 2005 (MEMRI 18 Mar. 2005; BBC 12 Mar. 2005). Human Rights Watch indicates that his trial began on 28 June 2005 (6 Dec. 2005). He was detained on 5 December 2005 (Human Rights Watch 6 Dec. 2005; *Al-Ahram Weekly* 15-21 Dec. 2005). He was convicted for having forged signatures required to have his party recognized and sentenced to a five-year jail term on 24 December 2005 (BBC 24 Dec. 2005; *The Washington Post* 25 Dec. 2005). According to *Country Reports 2005*, Ayman Nour's detention and trial were "fraught with irregularities and inconsistencies and failed to meet basic international standards" (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 1e). He was released from prison on 18 February 2009 (BBC 19 Feb. 2009; *New York Times* 19 Feb. 2009).

Incidents After the Detentions

According to Dow Jones International News, over 200 supporters of Ayman Nour demonstrated outside the al-Ghad party headquarters in Cairo on 9 February 2005 demanding his release, and riot police cordoned off the protest but did not intervene (9 Feb. 2005). Associated Press reports that another group of supporters of Ayman Nour held a demonstration on the steps of the High Court and at the al-Ghad offices in Cairo (1 Mar. 2005). A 3 March 2005 Human Rights First letter to President Hosni Mubarak states:

On the evening of February 24, a group of 22 men violently disrupted a meeting of Mr. Nour's supporters at the Pyramid Hotel in Cairo...From the accounts of eye-witnesses, this was a coordinated attack that could only have happened in such a heavily-policed setting with the consent of the authorities. Fifteen men dressed in white "training suits" disrupted the proceedings, first shouting down the speakers and throwing chairs, glasses and cups at them. The group, that was accompanied by seven men dressed in civilian clothes but armed with pistols, then attacked the panelists, beating Wael Nwara, an assistant to Mr. Nour, and Nour's lawyer, Ehab al-Khouly, who is assistant secretary-general of the Al-Ghad (Tomorrow) political party. Police, who are stationed at the hotel, did not intervene to prevent the assault on people who were simply exercising their basic rights to freedom of assembly and expression. (2005)

According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), numerous supporters of Ayman Nour demonstrated outside the courtroom on 24 December 2005 as the verdict was rendered; riot police were nearby but there were "no reports of disturbances" (24 Dec. 2005). *Country Reports 2006* states that police dispersed some al-Ghad supporters on 20 January 2006 who were holding up "Free Ayman Nour" signs at the entrance to the Cairo International Stadium (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 2b).

Treatment of al-Ghad Members by the State

In the *Al-Ahram Weekly*, the al-Ghad party stated that leader Ayman Nour and 300 party members travelling in a convoy were attacked by a large crowd in early May 2005 near the town of Kafr Saqr (12-18 May 2005). The party also stated that the attackers threw sticks, rocks and glass at the convoy, that guns were fired, that twenty people were injured, that a police truck hit and killed an al-Ghad supporter and that an NDP [National Democratic Party] member of parliament and his nephew were behind the attacks (*Al-Ahram Weekly* 12-18 May 2005). The same article reports that the police stated that six people were injured, that nobody died and that the attackers were villagers opposed to the presence of Ayman Nour (*ibid.*).

An 8 July 2006 *Daily News Egypt* article provides information on the ability of al-Ghad and other parties to conduct demonstrations:

Egyptian parties, including El-Ghad, face a number of challenges in the Egyptian political scene. One of these difficulties is working under the 25-year-old state of emergency, which gives the president military powers and prohibits the holding of demonstrations outside party headquarters. Each time Egyptians hold a demonstration, the Egyptian security has the right to arrest them, leading most Egyptians to be fearful of becoming involved in politics, even those who want to join El-Ghad. The result is a party that holds its activities and spread its ideas inside their own headquarters, unable to attract Egyptians in campuses or out on the streets. The El-Ghad weekly newspaper is the only tool that the party has to reach the people.

An al-Ghad spokesperson told Human Rights Watch that on 25 March 2007, security forces had encircled al-Ghad party offices in five cities and had detained six members; al-Ghad activists were opposing proposed constitutional amendments (26 Mar. 2007). A 29 October 2009 *Al-Sha'b* article states that Ayman Nour and his assistants were "violently assaulted with clubs by thugs who beat them, particularly his media assistant Ahmad Abd al-Jawad, as they were

leaving a restaurant in al-Ghardaqah." Al-Ghad members state that some of the assailants belonged to the Council of the NDP (*Al Sha'b* 29 Oct. 2009). The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, FIDH) and the World Organization Against Torture (Organisation mondiale contre la torture, OMCT), states that a representative of the al-Ghad party, and 32 other political activists who were expressing solidarity with recently killed Coptic Christians, were arbitrarily detained for one night in Sana on 15 January 2010 (Observatory 20 Jan. 2010). The released activists were threatened with prosecution for "violating the Constitution" and "constituting a group of more than five people inciting demonstrations" pursuant to the Emergency Law (*ibid.*).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Oral sources: The Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) did not respond to a request for information from the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sources, including: Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme (FIDH), Freedom House, Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF), Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), Middle East Online, Middle East Times, Office of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Refworld.

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